



Kia America, Inc. | Corporate Headquarters
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September 12, 2022

VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS

Sheena Hamilton, Esq.
City Counselor
City of St. Louis Law Dept.
1200 Market St., Room 314
St. Louis, MO 63103-2864

Re: *Your August 19, 2022 Letter to Kia and Hyundai*

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

Thank you for sending the above letter regarding thefts of Kia and Hyundai vehicles in the City of St. Louis. We are disappointed to hear that criminal actors are targeting our vehicles and understand that they are doing so in response to postings on social media. While we disagree with your characterizations about our products, we write to respond to the issues raised in your letter.

Without getting into the mechanics and steps required to steal these vehicles, what has emerged in St. Louis and some other locales is a new kind of automotive thief who is willing to drive around in a vehicle even though it has obvious outward signs of being stolen. This is a significant contrast from the traditional thief, who focused on vehicles that could be stolen without any obvious signs of theft while driving—and this is what vehicle designs have largely focused on preventing. While in the past there have been car thieves both for profit and pleasure—and there will continue to be no matter what security systems are used—the emergence of this new kind of thief is unquestionably a new and unfortunate development, which we are hopeful and confident that law enforcement is keenly focused on eliminating. With this new development, Kia has made engine immobilizers standard equipment for all of our vehicles, despite the fact that these components have not been required under federal regulations and still are not.

We strongly disagree with your statement that the subset of our vehicles that do not contain immobilizers are “defective,” or that these vehicles are the cause of the thefts, property damage, and acts of violence occurring in St. Louis. All of our vehicles meet and exceed the requirements of applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (“FMVSS”), including FMVSS 114, which is specifically aimed at reducing the likelihood of a vehicle being stolen or accidentally set in motion. As a fundamental issue, the thefts are not caused by the vehicles themselves but are caused by criminal actors who apparently are copying acts publicized on social media sites. There is no basis for any claim of public nuisance against Kia, and we will vigorously defend against any such claim.

While your letter states that Kia has failed to mitigate these theft issues, we have indeed taken actions to assist our customers and local governments that have been most affected by the thefts. Kia has partnered with local law enforcement agencies to provide thousands of free



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steering wheel locks to be distributed to customers whose vehicles lack an engine immobilizer. While no mechanism can guarantee against theft or vandalism, steering wheel locks are an effective deterrent against these crimes. While Kia has provided steering wheel locks to the University City Police Department in the St. Louis area, to date we have not been contacted by any law enforcement agency for the City of St. Louis in regards to our steering wheel lock program. Indeed, we are open to discussing whether City of St. Louis law enforcement agencies would be interested in this program. If that is of interest to you, please ask someone in City government or the appropriate law enforcement agency to contact James Bell at JBell@kiausa.com or 949-468-4625.

Kia is continuing to explore other options that may support our customers and local governments in light of these trends, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss practical measures that may help reduce the criminal activity identified in your letter. Please feel free to contact me directly at JYoon@kiausa.com or 949-468-4732. Moreover, we invite you to pass along our contact information to your City law enforcement agencies so we can discuss our steering wheel lock program.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Yoon', written over a horizontal line.

John Yoon
Executive VP, Legal
Kia America, Inc.